Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GUATEM 04703 271419Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 TRSE-00 EB-08 IGA-02
ACDA-07 MC-02 OMB-01 DHA-02 /113 W
----------096627 272201Z /70
R 262300Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6904
INFO AMCONSUL BELIZE
AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USUN NEW YORK 618
USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 4703

E.O. 11652: PBOR, BH GT SHUM MASS
TAGS: GDS
SUBJ: USG TAKES BRICKBATS ON BELIZE ISSUE

1. SUMMARY: PERHAPS INEVITABLY, U.S. ARMS POLICY AND EFFORTS TO HELP DEFUSE TENSIONS HAVE BEEN SEIZED UPON AS TILTING TOWARD U.K. IN BELIZE DISPUTE. END SUMMARY

2. JULY 26 PRENSA LIBRE HAS PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SECRETARY ROBERTO GILBN LEMUS STATING THAT U.S. WITHHOLDING OF ARMS FROM GUATEMALA /IMPLIES A FORM OF INTERVENTION" IN THE BELIZE DISPUTE. EARLIER, GIRON LEUMUS NEWSPAPER LA NACION SAW THE HAND OF THE UNITED STATES BEHIND BARBOADOS RECNT SEIZURE OF AN AMMUNITION SHIPMENT DESTINED TO GUATEMAL FROM PORTUGAL.
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PAGE 02 GUATEM 04703 271419Z

(FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA HAS SINCE ACKNOWLEDGED -- THE FIRST TIME ANY GOG OFFICIAL HAS PUBLICLY DONE SO-- THAT THE SHIPMENT VIOLATED BARBADIAN LEGAL PROCEDURES.)

3. GUATEMALAN AMBASSADOR TO U.S. COL. AGUNDIO MALDONADO EXPLAINED TO LOCAL REPORTERS JULY 25 THAT BECAUSE OF OUR CLOSENESS TO BOTH U.K. AND GUATEMALA AND OUR FEAR THAT

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

PROVISION OF ARMS TO GUATEMALA COULD FUEL CONFRONTATION,
U.S. SALE OF ARMS TO GUATEMALA IS "TOTALLY IMPROBABLE."

4. ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN'S JULY 21 REMARKS TO US/LA
MEDIA SEMINAR (USINFO, '7)6 22) HAVE BEEN SEIZED UPON IN
SOME QUARTERS HERE AS VALIDATING GUATEMALAN SUSPICIONS
OF U.S. INTERVENTION ON BELIZE. OFFENDING PASSAGES, IN
LA HORA'S HAWKISH EYES, WERE THOSE IN WHICH TODMAN
AFFIRMED OUR INTEREST IN PREVENTING ESCALATION OF LOCAL
DISPUTES, NOTED SECRETARY'S CONVERSATIONS WITH BOTH
PARTIES TO DISPUTE, AND (IN QUITE ANOTHER CONTEXT) STATED
OUR HOPE TO RESTRAIN EXTRA-HEMISPHERIC ARMS SUPPLIERS.
AN ARTICLE IN THE USUALLY MORE RESONSIBLE EL GRAFICO CAME
TO SIMILAR CONCLUSIONS A FEW DAYS EARLIER; AND SEVERAL
PAPERS HAVE CHOSEN TO INTERPRET SPOKESMAN'S JULY 16
STATEMENT ON WITHHOLDING EXPORT LICENSES FOR SMALL ARMS
ON HUMAN RIGHTS GROUNDS, AS AIMED AT GUATEMALA WITH
BELIZE RATHER THAN HUMAN RIGHTS THE REAL INSPRIATION FOR
THE DEPARTMENT'S INACTION. PRESIDENT LAUGERUD, OF COURSE,
PUBLICLY MADE MUCH THE SAME ACCUSATION-- GUATEMALA 4588.
WE KNOW ALSO THAT BRITISH USE OF OUR BERMUDA BASE TO REFUEL
BELIZE REINFORCEMENTS (NOT WIDELY PUBLICIZED HERE) HAS
RAISED SOME HACKLES IN GUATEMALAN MILITARY CIRCLES.

5. RELIEF FROM GENERALLY JAUNDICED VIEW OF U.S. MOTIVES
CAME IN FORM OF WIRESERVICE STORY FROM PRAVDA ALLEGING AN
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PAGE 03 GUATEM 04703 271419Z

ALLIANCE OF U.S. ECONOMIC INTERESTS WITH GOG TO BLOCK BELIZEAN
SELF-DETERMINATION. SEVERAL MEDIA CONCLUDED THAT SOVIET
POSITION ON BELIZE MAKES ACADEMIC PRESIDENT LAUGERUD'S THREAT
TO BUY ARMS FROM SOVIETS IF STYMIED ELSEWHERE.

6. COMMENT: THESE PERCEPTIONS ARE NOT UNIVERSAL, BUT THE
MORE THEY ARE AIRED THE MORE THEY TEND TO COMPLICATE THE
NEGOTIATING CLIMATE. IT HAS NOT BEEN EASY FOR THE GOG, ON
THE ONE HAND, TO PORTRAY THE WASHINGTON TALKS AS A
GUATEMALAN TRIUMPH, WHILE ON THE OTHER, TO EDUCATE A WATCHFUL
PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT THE NEED FOR FLEXIBLE NEGOTIATING
POSITION. THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT AFFORD TO GIVE THE
IMPRESSION IT HAS "SOLD OUT," POSSIBLY UNDER AMERICAN
PRESSURE, AS SOME HAVE CHARGED. IN CONSEQUENCE FEW
GUATEMALANS EXPECT DRAMATIC RESULTS FROM THE JULY 26-28
VISIT OF U.K. NEGOTIATOR ROWLANDS THE GOG HAS BEEN CAREFUL
TO LEAD THE PUBLIC TO EXPECT LITTLE MORE THAN A SCHEDULING
OF A RESUMPTION OF FORMAL TALKS AND SOME FURTHER REDUCTION
IN MILITARY DEPLOYMENT IN THE BORDER AREA.
BOSTER

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

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TAGS: PGOV, PARM, US, BH
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Type: TE
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Margaret P. Grafeld
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EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
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